

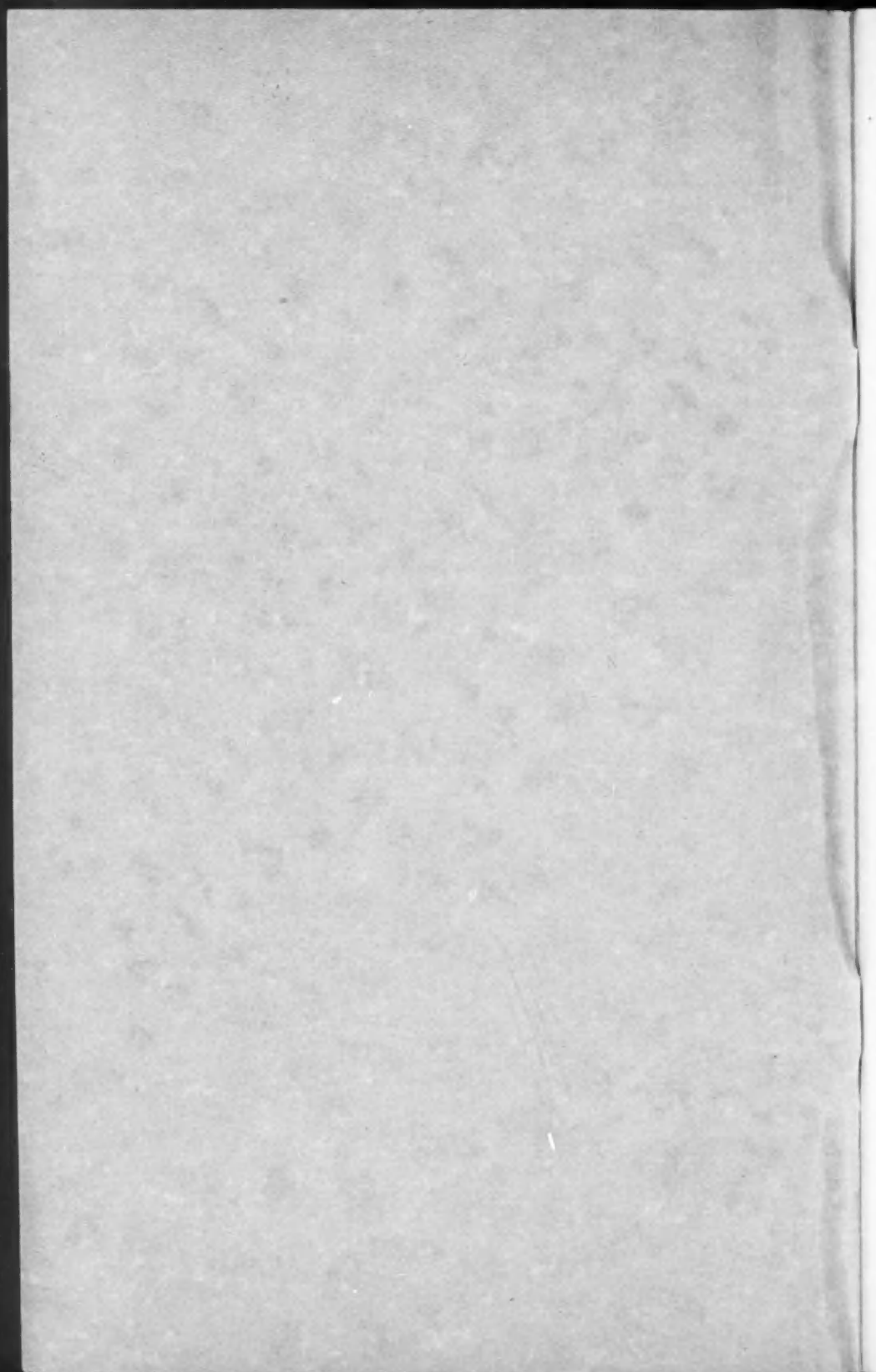
THE CONSORT

Number Twelve

July, 1955



PUBLISHED BY THE DOLMETSCH FOUNDATION



FOREWORD

IN every issue of THE CONSORT, the Editor has aimed at publishing articles of general interest not only to all lovers of early music but to executants who seek to capture the spirit in which it was written. In former issues there has been something for players of the organ, harpsichord, viol, viola d'amore etc. In this issue, violinists, recorder players and clavichord players will find matter appertaining to their instrument.

We heartily thank all our generous contributors:—

Mabel Dolmetsch for a further instalment of her personal recollections of Arnold Dolmetsch and more photographs from her collection.

Carl Dolmetsch for valuable hints to violinists about Bach's intentions and how to realise them.

Dr. Hildemarie Peter for allowing us to make a digest of her remarkable lecture on Ganassi's *Fontegara*, given at the "Recorder in Education" Summer School, Roehampton, last August.

Harry Danks for enlarging on the probable influence Ariosti exercised on Vivaldi.

Lastly, the Editor makes some suggestions which may be helpful to would-be clavichord players and takes this opportunity of expressing her lifelong gratitude to Arnold Dolmetsch for having introduced her to this most lovable instrument and her indebtedness to the late Paul Brunold for the hitherto unpublished photograph of Beethoven's clavichord.

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This copy is No.

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF

ARNOLD DOLMETSCH

BY

MABEL DOLMETSCH

ARNOLD DOLMETSCH, who from his childhood upwards had been accustomed to the decimal system of monetary calculation, never quite adjusted himself to our pounds, shillings and pence method. He once had a fierce argument on the subject with the noted educationalist, Isabelle Fry, wherein he condemned it as "*I-diotic*," while she attacked the decimal system on the grounds that it made calculation too easy, thus affording insufficient exercise to the human brain!

When the time drew near for his return trip to England, he made (as he thought) careful calculations as to what sum of English money he would need to take him from door to door. But, on disembarking from the *LUSITANIA* on a Sunday morning, he discovered that the purchase of his railway ticket from Liverpool to London left him with just one half-penny in his pocket. Postponing lunch on this account, he arrived at the terminus with sharpened appetite. *Quoi faire?* He was reduced to borrowing ten shillings from the faithful van driver who transported him, together with some of his instruments, back to Seymour Place.

Next day, with his purse replenished with gold and silver, he set out for Dorking; and on arriving at Goldenlands Farm, was enchanted by the sight of our beautiful daughter, Cécile, now fourteen months old. Being a precocious child, she was actually able to toddle round the farm, steadying herself by holding on to one finger of her enraptured parent's hand.

Apart from his week-ends in Dorking, Arnold found his six weeks' stay closely packed with the finishing off of the clavichord destined for Neville Lytton, and the general winding up of his affairs. A welcome diversion was afforded by the giving of a concert in company with Beatrice Horne and Kathleen Salmon at a garden party organized by the Reverend Stuart Headlam (popular preacher and founder of the "Church and Stage Society"). It was for this boldly unconventional person that Arnold had made his first Beethoven piano, decorated by their mutual friend, Selwyn Image.

Intervals of leisure were employed in improving his acquaintance with some among my own family. For two of these he developed a strong affection, namely my youngest brother, Alex, and an elder sister named Lilian, who possessed, in addition to various artistic gifts, a voice of unusual quality. Although of restricted range, it had a clear timbre, resembling that of a silver bell, such as I have not heard from any other singer. Calling on him one afternoon, she observed in the course of their conversation that she had a splitting headache. Arnold, diagnosing this as a purely nervous symptom, took her out to dine at his favourite French restaurant in Soho. Here they feasted on the *Specialités de la Maison*, enhanced by appropriate wines. At the conclusion of the meal she pronounced the cure complete. The headache had vanished as if by magic!

Naturally, some time was set aside for renewing contact with special friends, such as Lady Noble, Janet Dodge, Robert Trevelyan, Selwyn Image, Roger Fry, and of course Robert Steele. From Steele he bought a very fine lute, made in Padua in 1595, and in perfect condition. This instrument became his favourite among all the lutes he had so far played on, although it was actually rather large for his comparatively small hand. Yet he managed to produce from its depths the most splendid tone.

For the more florid music, however, he came latterly to use an uncommonly pretty instrument of more convenient proportions, doubtless remembering the advice of Thomas Mace (in *Musick's Monument*): "The first thing to be thought upon . . . is to get a good lute and of a fit size for the hand." The Paduan lute now reposes in the Folger Collection, housed in the State Library of Washington.

A new acquisition of epoch-making importance, which Arnold brought back from England, was the first ancient recorder that he had ever handled. The temporary loss of this fine instrument some 15 years later inspired him to put into operation the manufacture of new ones, a venture which might otherwise have been indefinitely delayed.

Thus there came into being the first recorders to be made in modern times. An interesting example of their penetration into unexpected quarters of the globe was afforded in more recent times by an urgent appeal coming from a young man residing in India, for a new one to be sent out as soon as possible, his previous recorder having been stolen while he was staying in the Himalaya Mountains! Arnold viewed the thief's action in the light of a compliment.



ARNOLD DOLMETSCH AND ELODIE

Sketch by Elinor Pugh, c. 1902



ARNOLD DOLMETSCH AT CHICKERING'S, 1907



ARNOLD AND MABEL DOLMETSCH WITH CHARLES W. ADAMS, 1907



HOUSE AT 11, ELMWOOD AVENUE, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.,
BUILT FOR ARNOLD DOLMETSCH IN 1908



VIEW OF THE MUSIC ROOM AND ENTRANCE HALL



The vessel finally chosen for Arnold's return journey to America was the MINNEHAHA, sailing from Tilbury Dock. She was not one of the fast ships, but a very comfortable and pleasant one. On this occasion she truly lived up to her name of "Laughing Water," for she bore her passengers gaily across the Atlantic Ocean, dancing over the sparkling wavelets that were scarcely more than ripples. Arnold employed his time on board mastering the elements of recorder technique, and also amusing himself with teaching the infant Cécile to produce thereon the notes of the cuckoo, a sound with which she had become familiar during this her second summer in Dorking.

A source of some consternation at the outset of the voyage was the discovery that all the milk on board had turned sour. Cécile, reared on the rich milk of the Goldenlands Farm, rejected this substitute with a grimace. Happily, Providence came to the rescue in the person of a young man who, approaching Arnold, asked "What milk are you giving to that baby?" On being told of the dilemma, he announced that he had a herd of prize cattle aboard, and would be delighted to supply the baby with a pitcher of fresh milk twice daily.

Cécile soon became a popular character among her fellow passengers, and furthermore chose as her particular friend the Captain of the ship, a formidable looking Scot with a scarlet face and flaming hair, who pandered to her every fancy.

The MINNEHAHA came to port in New York Harbour amid a sweltering heat wave. This was indeed a startling change after the balmy breezes over the Atlantic Ocean. After slaking their thirst at a "Dairy Lunch," Arnold, Nanna, and Cécile boarded the Grand Rapid for Chicago.

These weeks of separation had been passed by me largely in industrious preparations for their reception, since, although the flat had been let as "furnished," such furniture as it possessed was mostly of crude fabrication, knocked together with nails by the former tenant. As to beds, she had dispensed with such luxuries, preferring to make her couch on the floor. Owing to the then prevailing teamsters' strike, our consignment of these necessary adjuncts to our home comfort had to be delivered to our door by a non-union volunteer, under the escort of a squad of twelve policemen! The young artist's fancy for painting the ceilings and friezes black, under the pretext that it produced an impression of infinity, I found distinctly oppressive; and so lost no time in getting them whitened. Drawers intended for linen had to be cleared of miscellaneous litter, including old dogs' dinners and greasy frying pans.

Other domestic tasks, interspersed with the study of new pieces for the viola da gamba and the fashioning of little garments for the infant Cécile and for the expected new baby, amply filled up my time of waiting. The last named occupation I used to enjoy, sitting out beneath the spreading trees of the beautiful Jackson Park, enjoying delightful glimpses of interesting birds, many of which were new to me, and listening to the prattling of children playing on the grassy slopes.

As the time for the family's arrival drew near, my excitement mounted to fever height; and the final night of expectation was passed by me, for the only time in my life, without one wink of sleep! Doubtless the travellers themselves had little more than a fitful dozing, as they hurtled along in the Grand Rapid. However the joy of re-union kept us all wide awake throughout the ensuing day.

Early next morning, Arnold arose, and, full of enthusiasm, set forth with his viola d'amore to play amid the woodland glades of the Jackson Park. Some twenty minutes later he re-appeared at the flat with the strings of his instrument saturated with morning dew! He had not realised that the prevailing temperature of 96 degrees in the shade was coupled with a humidity of 100%. Thenceforward, for the inside of a week, he spent much of his time reclining in a cold bath! Once fairly acclimatized, however, he set about procuring some nearby accommodation for a workshop, without which his world would have been incomplete. The very thing came to hand in the form of a large empty shop situated just across the road.

There were a number of these one-storied temporary buildings, run up at the time of the great Chicago Exhibition, in close proximity to the Jackson Park, wherein the exhibition had been held. In later years these commodious shops, left standing empty, came as a great boon to the impecunious artists of Chicago, who converted them into three-roomed flats by means of screens and curtains, the middle section being lit by a skylight.

Arnold, comfortably installed in his own shop, and equipped with bench and tools, at once set about repairing his eighteenth-century Hoffman clavichord, that had been wrecked on our return journey from California. It was knocked down from its precarious perch on the top of a large up-ended trunk where it had been posed by a negro porter, who subsequently (while making a flying leap from the already moving train) caught the edge of the instrument with his foot and sent it spinning along the platform.

This experience decided me not to have my little dog Dinah brought out from England; for I shuddered at the thought of what might happen to her, enclosed in a crate in the luggage van throughout the thousand-mile journey from New York to Chicago. So she was left to enjoy the blissfully rural life at Goldenlands Farm, catching rats and rearing distinguished progeny.

It took but a short time for Cécile and Nanna to adapt themselves to their new surroundings, made vastly entertaining by their explorations of the immense park and the nearby Lake Shore. Three weeks later the second baby was born, a sweet little yellow-haired girl with sea blue eyes, who was christened "Louise Nathalie," which names quickly merged themselves into "Lili." Arnold remarked humorously that no doubt we should have a string of little blonde girls, all taking after me! "Because," said he, "my grandfather had four daughters and my mother four sons."

There followed three months of blissful domesticity, punctuated by amusing intercourse with all the delightful Chicago people whose acquaintance we had made. This company of artists, sculptors, writers and musicians gave us a warm welcome; and the artists made us honorary members of their "Little room club" in the Fine Arts Building. There was also a sprinkling of out of season concerts, round and about, for which we were again joined by Kathleen Salmon.

In November came once more the wrench, when we had to leave our children to the care of Nanna, with an assistant nurse, and travel eastwards. In New York we rejoined Ben Greet, arriving in time for his performances of *Macbeth*. It was at this period that Sybil Thorndike began to prove her mettle.

The week preceding our arrival had been devoted to performances of Shakespeare's *Henry V*, and it had so happened that, at the last rehearsal on the opening day, Ben Greet had a tearing row with his new leading lady (a person of Dutch nationality, and probably unable to appreciate his peculiar kind of humour). Consequently she abruptly walked out of the theatre and obstinately refused to come back. All the cast was in consternation, except Sybil, who cheerfully undertook, on the spur of the moment, to play the part of Catherine, which feat she accomplished with signal success. She was of the type to which Greet referred as "always so obligin'." He applied this same

laudatory epithet, in the latter part of his life, to my niece Thea Holme, who (at the Paris Exhibition of 1925), owing to the sudden sickness of the portrayer of Puck in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, jumped into the part at a few hours' notice.

As soon as *Henry V* had completed its run in New York, Sybil Thorndike modestly descended to the minor rôle of one of the Macbeth witches, with childlike enthusiasm; and came to show us how fantastically hideous she could make herself appear as the leading witch. Her art indeed transcended all other considerations. It is understandable that those who lacked the necessary wit should have failed to appreciate Ben Greet's sardonic jests; for indeed these sometimes verged on the cruel. I call to mind how a rather *too* good looking young member of the company, imagining his attire to be insufficiently gorgeous for his part in the play, appeared on the stage shortly before the curtain rose, wearing an enormous blue sash! Ben Greet surveyed him critically with half-closed eyes from a corner of the stage, and then remarked meditatively (talking through his nose in an affected manner) "Makes yer look like Little Lord Fauntleroy!" The poor young man retired in confusion. Afterwards he announced to Arnold, in chilly tones, "I am always ready to co-operate with Mr. Greet *upon the stage*; but away from the theatre *I do not know him*."

The production of *Macbeth* was a triumph of artistry wherein full advantage was taken of the sinister effect of contrasted mirth and horror. The nightmare banquet scene was preceded by the passage across the stage (empty but for the musicians) of a succession of servitors bearing immense dishes of rich viands, including boars' heads, roasted peacocks, garnished confections, and great flagons of wine. During this interlude we, the musicians, performed some ancient Scottish airs, cleverly juxtaposed by Arnold, so that a falsely jocund, elf-like tune called "The Old Man" alternated with a threatening and doleful dirge entitled "Woe Betyde thy Wearie Bodie." For me, this freakishly insistent alternation produced an effect that was positively gruesome, and aptly prepared the audience for the weird scene that was to follow. The organising of this scene was a masterpiece of stage strategy, by which Ben Greet so handled his personnel that the cadaverous Banquo's ghost mysteriously appeared as though from nowhere with awful suddenness, before the terrified Macbeth, and then just as suddenly disappeared amid the confused jostling and panic of his "frighted" guests. The rôle of Macbeth was convincingly portrayed by Alec Casson (later to become the brother-in-law of Sybil Thorndike).

The *Macbeth* production was followed by some other plays in which incidental music was not required. We therefore parted from the company for the time being, to fulfil some concert engagements. Two of these took us across the border to Toronto. Here we made many friends and were cordially entertained by my charming cousin Kitty Wright and her husband, Professor Ramsay Wright, who was Vice-President of Toronto University. Towards the close of our visit, Arnold was approached with the offer of a post in the University, to be devoted to the practical revival of ancient music. He was much attracted by this proposal, and was seriously considering it, when a yet more startling prospect opened up before him, as will be explained later.

Early in December we rejoined Ben Greet in Boston, where various Shakespeare plays were performed, including *Much Ado About Nothing*. Herein we provided the appropriate music, including "The Sick Tune" and "Light O' Love." At the close of the final scene, as the gay company danced off the stage, Arnold suddenly sprang to his feet and, holding his viol aloft, danced off in their wake, still echoing the merry tune. A member of the audience (William Wilson, husband of Helen Hopekirk, the pianist) said to me, when we eventually became acquainted, "From that moment I loved him"!

At last came the pause for the Christmas celebrations, for which we were able to rejoin our darling children and give them their first experience of a Christmas tree, having assembled all the accessories somehow *en route*.

After the holiday came another period of extensive journeyings for concerts, intermingled with stage performances, and it was during a second visit to Boston that the turning point in Arnold's career arrived. One morning we were called upon by a representative of the House of Chickering, piano makers. He, the youngest member of the firm, was named Byrne, and being of Irish extraction was of a romantic turn of mind. Possessed moreover of artistic tastes and keenly interested in the older music, he was able to inspire his superiors, Messrs. Foster and Eddy, with his own enthusiasm. The outcome of our meeting was that Arnold was offered the complete control of a department of Chickering's Factory, where he would be free to manufacture harpsichords, clavichords, large oblong virginals, triangular spinets, small octavina virginals, lutes and viols! Thus there opened up before him a glorious vista of future achievement, in which he was given complete freedom of enterprise.

This remarkable offer was accepted, and after fulfilling the remaining concert and stage engagements, which included another memorable visit to Toronto, we set about re-organising our lives on this spacious basis. We returned to Chicago where, gathering up our children and their Nanna, and packing our goods, we bade farewell to this friendly city, with all our happy circle there, and took a slow and comfortable train for Boston. Two pathetic figures, who longed to attach themselves as members of our suite, had perforce to be left behind. One was a charming old negress, named Matilda Green. Though possessed of a marvellous knack with fretful babes, she had a serious drawback, namely, that she ate everything she met, from raw pork sausages (over which she was content to pour boiling water) to cakes and lemons, inadvertently left for an instant on the kitchen dresser, ready to be converted into table delicacies! The other was an old negro laundry man whose mother had been a slave and who had himself been sold away from her in his infancy. He adored children and kept saying to me, "If only de genelman would take me with him I'd rear de chillun for him."

A house in Arlington Street, Cambridge, Mass., had already been found for us in advance by the enterprising Mr. Byrne, so that as soon as our chattels arrived, we were able to settle in. This rather old-fashioned house possessed the unusual advantage of an enclosed garden and orchard, thus feeling to us quite homely after our long period of life in hotels and flats. During the first month after settling in, Arnold remained at home working out his plans for a new model of harpsichord, based primarily on the French system as exemplified by his Taskin harpsichord, but with a pedal action to provide increased resources. As soon as his department at Chickering's had been organised, he was allowed to take his pick from among the working staff, and was thus enabled to assemble a choice band of excellent collaborators of various nationalities. Among these his most trusty helper was a Swede named Ericsson. This man who, on account of his uncommon dexterity, had been relegated exclusively to the task of covering piano hammers with felt, had begun to develop lung trouble through the perpetual breathing in of the loose fluff. By making choice of this accurate and conscientious workman, Arnold, besides being the gainer, felt that he had saved the man's life.

Another valuable assistant was a French Canadian, usually considered rather a surly fellow, but between whom and Arnold there existed a perfect understanding, based upon the use of their

mutual mother tongue. I also heard tell of an interesting old Italian with sensitive, clever fingers, who worked upon the finer parts of the harpsichord mechanism. His fellow workers used to object that he was too old and ought to retire; but he averred that his wife would not allow him to do so.

Others there were, all well chosen as though by intuitive appraisal; and so the work proceeded merrily, and all the instruments produced found ready buyers, even to the lutes and viols. The first viola da gamba was destined for Mr. Foster, as a compliment to the head of the firm. He immediately set himself to learn how to play it, and eventually organised a consort among the members of his family. Another went to a Frenchman named Kefer, first 'cellist of the New York Symphony Orchestra, and a third to Adamoffsky, violinist in the same orchestra. Some fine tenor viols were produced, whose heads were carved by a Bavarian wood carver. The first of these was intended to be a portrait of Arnold, while the second portrayed my own features; and an accompanying treble viol had a charming likeness of Cécile as a little winged sprite. This viol and the first tenor, after a period of wandering, are now among the family collection.

A number of two-manual harpsichords provided scope for a variety of styles in their outward aspect. Some, in common with many of the clavichords and octavina virginals (which were made in considerable numbers), were painted green, with gold bands, the inside of the lid being coloured in glowing Chinese vermilion and further adorned by one or another of the ancient classical mottoes. Others relied upon the natural beauty of the wood for their effect, such as a richly figured fiery mahogany or a dark coromandel wood, streaked with lighter veins, and lit up by ornate silver hinges.

Certain clavichords were painted entirely in ivory-white and gold, the effect of which was surprisingly sumptuous. One of these is here shown among the accompanying illustrations. A few oblong virginals were produced, after the ancient Flemish model, appropriately ornamented with the traditional scroll patterns. Although picturesque, they were somewhat cumbersome as compared with the triangular spinets, fashioned in the seventeenth-century style of darkish woods, inlaid with lines of lighter hue, which served to emphasize the graceful curves of their outline.

Arnold felt some anxiety as to the financial results of all these bold enterprises; but when he questioned Mr. Foster on this point, he was answered, "We are not worrying about that."

Musically, the firm of Chickering was as generous as on the instrumental side. Not only did they approve of Arnold's accepting from time to time concert engagements that necessitated his temporary absence from the workshop, but themselves sponsored during the height of each season a series of grand concerts in Chickering Hall. The first in each series was always a Christmas concert, including in its programme Corelli's Christmas Concerto and Bach's Christmas Oratorio, for which latter work two oboes d'amore were specially made by Mahillon of Brussels.

These concerts naturally called for additional performers, the instrumentalists being mostly drawn from members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Here again Arnold was given *carte blanche*; and when at first he hesitated about engaging Longy, the first oboe player, who commanded a fee twice as large as that of the second oboe, Mr. Foster said, "Never mind about that! It will add to the general prestige to have Longy." This man, Longy, was an extraordinary fellow. In appearance he resembled a butcher, being stout and of a florid complexion; and yet he could play with exquisite delicacy where required, so that the oboe and viola da gamba could comfortably duologue on equal terms in a Haydn Divertimento. He was a terrific eater; concerning whose prowess in this respect we were told an amusing story by André Maquarre (first flautist in the Boston Orchestra). One day, after an exacting performance, some of the players adjourned to a popular restaurant for a good square meal. Towards the close of this, when most of the party had satisfied their hunger, Longy beckoned to the waiter and asked him to bring a ham. The man whisked away and quickly reappeared with some slices of ham on a plate. "What is this?" exclaimed Longy, "I asked for a ham; and when I say *a ham* I mean *a ham*." Once more the perturbed waiter disappeared, and this time returned with a whole ham on a dish. Before the astonished gaze of the company, Longy devoured the lot!

The appearance of the second oboe (Lenom) was in marked contrast to that of his companion, he being of pale complexion and slender build. In common with the leading viola player (Gietzen), he was of Belgian nationality. These two (together with Maquarre the flautist) were frequent visitors at our house. The bond between Arnold and Maquarre was further strengthened when it transpired that Arnold's cousin, Fernand Bobelin, had been Maquarre's teacher at the Paris Conservatoire.

Our leading first violin in these concerts was a Hungarian named Bak, possessor of a colourful tone and a brilliant technique, which he lost no opportunity of displaying during the pauses in rehearsals. His frenzied improvisations, however, were of a stereotyped pattern with which one soon became familiar. Arnold, during this period, filled the rôle of solo harpsichordist, and none of the players realized that he was primarily a violinist. One day during rehearsal, when Bak was being persistently dense about a matter of phrasing, Arnold reached out a hand towards him and, taking the violin, illustrated his point by playing the passage in question. - This startled everyone, including Bak!

The little chamber orchestra thus assembled was amusingly cosmopolitan, myself with the Violone representing England, while the only American-born member was Arthur Hadley (brother of Henry Hadley, composer and conductor). He owned a beautiful Ruggiero 'cello, and was an excellent ensemble player whom Arnold characterized as "firm as a rock." Otherwise one might say that the string players hailed from Central and Eastern Europe, the brass from Germany, and the wood-wind from France and Belgium. There was an abundance of fine vocalists, both American and of foreign extraction. One shining light among these was a young Swedish lady named Marie Sundborg Sundelius, as beautiful to look at as to listen to, the rich tone-colour of whose lovely soprano voice dwells ever in my memory.

As auxiliary harpsichordist for our own chamber concerts we had a young Californian (one-time infant prodigy) named Charles Adams, employed by Chickering to demonstrate pianos. He took to the harpsichord with immense enthusiasm and acquired a nice easy touch. Thus we were able once more to complete our ensemble which had suffered a loss through the return to England of Kathleen Salmon.

In November, 1906, our first son was born, whereby Arnold's prophecy concerning the string of little blonde girls was disproved. Furthermore, far from being small and blonde, the sturdy child was large and as dark as a little papoose, with a crop of black hair and huge, shining black eyes. Mr. Byrne presented him with a fox's skin, which he said was the traditional tribute due to an infant hero. It subsequently served the infant hero in many a thrilling game of fierce wild animals! The child was named Rudolph after his paternal grandfather, and was christened in the little old church in Boston which had originally

been built by the first English settlers, out of timber that had been brought from England. His godparents, drawn from members of my own family, had perforce to be represented by proxies. It was Florence Farr, as such, who held him at the Font.

Profiting by the rate war then raging among the rival shipping companies, Florence Farr had come out from England, travelling first class with all found at a cost of £3 10s. od. We were delighted to see her, and passed some merry hours listening to her amusing talk and anecdotes about our mutual acquaintances. She also entertained us and others, including Byrne who appeared much fascinated, with her recitations to the accompaniment of her psaltery.

About this time we decided, somewhat optimistically, that we ought to have a house built in accordance with our individual tastes and mode of living. We chose as our site what was known as a "back lot" in a large field, adjoining the house of the late poet Lowell, whose descendants still lived there. Our architect was a young French Canadian (himself a good violinist) whose family name had originally been *L'Esquier*, since converted into *Luquer*, and pronounced by his acquaintances as "Look queer." Indeed it was a charming house, devised in a quite practical and intelligent manner. The staircase (whose balustrade was supported by vertical wooden strips, in which were cut out shapes of viols) was so planned that no child could fall down more than four steps before arriving at a landing place.

The main hall, opening off a small entrance lobby, was in itself a pleasant sitting room whence folding doors gave admittance to the dining room. Beyond this, other doors opened on to a large roofed-in verandah, serving as a kind of sunny, open air room in summer time. Side by side with these rooms there was the music room, planned in the ideal proportions of a double square and having on three sides French windows giving on to the enclosed garden. On the fourth side there was a *real* fireplace, wide enough to accommodate large logs; and on either side thereof were folding doors which, when opened, slid into the wall. Thus these three ground floor rooms (but for the intervening fireplace) could be fused into one.

We found this arrangement very propitious for the holding of what Arnold termed his "Concerts of Intimate Music." At these concerts the music for viols, consisting of Pavans, Galliards, Airs and Fantasies, could produce its full effect. Our viol consorts were made up of ourselves, plus a little band of enthu-

siastic string players whom Arnold had initiated into the viol technique. These players met at our house regularly on Sunday afternoons for practice. I noted with surprise how adaptable and free from prejudice these people were. They took readily to the fretted viols, the underhand bowing and the manner of holding, not only the large but also the smaller instruments downwards. Arnold, however, considered this to be the natural reaction of a young race in course of development, whose artistic conceptions and formulæ were still malleable.

The audiences attending these concerts were interesting in themselves and consequently acted as a source of inspiration to the players. A regular attendant was Miss Longfellow, sister of the poet. She was a charming old lady for whom I always placed a comfortable armchair near the entrance, she being hampered by lameness. On one occasion, just as the music was starting, there was a stir among the audience and who should sail in, but, Madame Blanche Marchesi, accompanied by her husband, the Baron Cacamisi. She was about to embark on a tour of the States, during which her husband acted as her *homme d'affaires*. On scanning the programme she saw that it included a group of early songs, published by Arnold, amongst which there appeared "Have you seen but a white lily grow?" This happened to be one of her own special favourites which she looked upon as sacred to herself. During the interval, therefore, amid the coffee and cakes, she bore down fiercely on Mrs. Sundelius, exclaiming: "You are singing my song!" This quite unnerved the angelic-voiced singer who, on arriving at the number in question actually *faltered* in the ascending scale which closes the opening phrase. Such was the dynamic force of Blanche Marchesi's personality. As regards myself it worked the other way, acting as a stimulus, there being no ground for competition between us.

Prominent also on this occasion was Mrs. Jack Gardner, the reigning patroness of the Arts, who arrived by tramcar from Boston in company with Helen Hopekirk and her husband, William Wilson (our mutual friends). Mrs. Jack Gardner was at that time following a *régime* of ostentatious economy; having recently been mulcted of an enormous sum of money by the American customs officials for having smuggled into the country some valuable fifteenth and sixteenth-century pictures to add to her already fine collection. She therefore declared that she could no longer afford to have grape fruit for breakfast, but had to be content with oranges. She also temporarily ceased to use her car, and travelled by tram, wearing rich attire enhanced by

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diamond rings and ropes of pearls, any of which, if sold, could have compensated her for the heavy fine imposed!

There was indeed an atmosphere of intimacy about these concerts held in such pleasant surroundings such as one does not usually experience in a concert hall, where there seems to be a gulf fixed between performers and listeners. Consequently, the type of audience attracted was both receptive and inspiring. I look back on these times as a peak period in Arnold's career when he, in his prime, was able to give free rein to his musical and reconstructive genius, at the same time living in comfort and security. Mentally I compare it with the sumptuous period in the life of Benvenuto Cellini, during which he thrived under the patronage of François I, King of France.



A PRACTICAL APPROACH TO

BACH'S VIOLIN SONATAS

BY

CARL DOLMETSCH

MOST VIOLINISTS who approach the problems of performance connected with Bach's solo sonatas are good sight readers, whose natural tendency it is to handle their subject literally. This admirable accomplishment, here misplaced, usually leads the thinking minority to experiments in trying to achieve results which were in fact never intended by the composer. A glance at some of the passages of polyphonic writing in the solo sonatas will at once reveal that they are something more than a mere series of three and four-part chords. There is nearly always a solo melodic line somewhere in the harmonies, while other notes of the chords serve as its accompaniment rather in the manner of a *recitative*. To an ignorant violinist for whom chord-playing consists solely of beginning with the lowest note and ending with the top one (arpeggio fashion), this effect is immediately lost—especially as the melody may be anywhere in the harmony and frequently in the middle notes of a chord. The literal and conscientious player who may have noticed this can achieve much, despite his inadequate modern bow and over-curved bridge, by coming to rest at the end of his chords on the important melody note which is sustained and given due expressive meaning after the other notes have ceased to sound. Another type of conscientious scholar, bound by the letter rather than the spirit, will seek to treat the time values of the subsidiary notes in the chords as if they had been intended literally. His experimentation with "Vega" bows (which have been erroneously described as "historically correct"), fitted with gadgets which enable the player to slacken the tension of the bow hair in the course of performance, do in fact allow him to achieve his aim of sustaining all the notes in three or four-part chords for their entire written time-value. The net result leads to the notes all being given equal prominence and the "melody-note" of the chord being lost among them. The sensible answer (and the one which has received the least publicity, despite its continuous use at Haslemere) is that to which Arnold Dolmetsch was led, almost accidentally in 1915. He had been engaged to play the solo *Violino Piccolo* part in the 1st Brandenburg Concerto at a Bach festival in Queen's Hall, London. This he undertook to perform on a genuine *Violino Piccolo* by Maggini (still one of

SONATA I. (Bach Gesellschaft)

Adagio.

PARTITA II.

Chaconne.

the gems of the Dolmetsch Collection in Haslemere). The little instrument, tuned a minor third higher than the standard violin, was too small for Arnold Dolmetsch's Tourte bow, which then seemed unwieldy and incapable of producing the required definition. He solved the problem by using a very short 17th century outcurved bow, with admirable results. The performance over, he returned to his full-sized violin and his incurved Tourte bow. To his surprise this long bow no longer satisfied him. Almost as a jest, he seized the excessively short outcurved bow he had been using with the little violin. In astonishment, he realised that it solved the problems of articulation, while its powers for chord-playing were a revelation. It was obvious that this particular bow (probably intended for a child) was too short for use with a full-sized violin and he then began to make outcurved bows of sufficient length—approximately three-quarters the length of modern bows. It was for this type of bow and a bridge less curved than the modern pattern that Bach, as an essentially *practical* man (not a "visionary" writing for some future age!), really wrote. The true outcurved "Bach bow" affords the necessary strength and resilience throughout its length to enable three or four-part chords to be struck (up or down bow) with equal ease in any part—tip, middle or heel. The intelligent player who has appreciated the *recitative* nature of the chordal passages will sustain the melody-line (already referred to) and will realise that time-values were not intended always to be taken literally in Bach's day. Like others of his time Bach was less specific in his use of notation and rests than 19th and 20th century composers and it was obviously easier for him to write a four-part chord consisting entirely of minims than to show the melody-line by a long note, to be accompanied by shorter notes followed by a collection of short rests. In any case he expected his music to be played by thinking musicians, not modern virtuosi nor sight readers bound by the written text, mistakenly believing it to be complete and infallible.

This article has been concerned with one technical aspect only, but it should not be forgotten that there are many other essentials concerning the correct ornamentation, expression, phrasing and tempi, all of which must play their part in a completely authentic and satisfying performance. In general terms these essentials have been dealt with very fully in Arnold Dolmetsch's epoch-making book, "The Interpretation of Music of the 17th and 18th Centuries" (Novello), wherein the views of the early composers have been quoted, translated and co-ordinated in masterly fashion.

AN INTRODUCTION TO
GANASSI'S TREATISE ON THE RECORDER (1535)

BY

DR. HILDEMARIE PETER

based on her lecture to the Society of Recorder Players
on August 5th, 1954.

SYLVESTRO DI GANASSI's treatise entitled *Fontegara*, printed in Venice in 1535, is not only a manual on the art of playing the recorder, but a textbook on the art of ornamentation at that time. As far as is known, only six copies have survived, one in each of the following towns: Florence, Bologna, Milan, Jena, Tuebingen, Wolfenbuettel. The latter is remarkable in two respects which I will mention in a moment.

Little is known of the author himself. He was born in Venice in the year 1492. He grew up in Fontego, near Venice, and presumably for this reason called his book *Fontegara*. He describes himself on the frontispiece as *Sonator della Illustrissima Signoria di Venezia*. He was also in the service of a Venetian Prince, Andrea Gritti, to whom the book is dedicated. He must have been an excellent musician of many accomplishments and he undoubtedly excelled not only in the art of playing the recorder but also the viol, as his other surviving work is a treatise on the viols entitled *Regula Rubertina* which he published in 1542.⁽¹⁾

Fontegara has an especially interesting frontispiece. The title reads as follows:—

OPERA INTITULATA FONTEGARA

which teaches how to play the recorder (*flauto*) with all the skill this instrument demands, and also the ornamentation and divisions suitable to wind and string instruments as well as to those who delight in singing. . .

Below this is a fine woodcut which gives a lively picture of a typical sixteenth century ensemble. Here, five people are making music together. One recorder player is probably doubling the voice of the singer who is beating time with his finger on the player's shoulder; these two are sharing the same part-book. Two other recorder players (tenor and treble) each have their own music books lying in front of them on a table; and on the right stands the master, beating time on the end of the table with his

(1) The frontispiece of *Regula Rubertina* was reproduced in *THE CONSORT*, No. 6.

right hand and holding a sopranino recorder in his left. Three sizes of viols and a lute are hanging on the wall behind them. These are probably alternative instruments which the men in the picture would be ready to take down and play at a moment's notice. Two cornetts are lying in the foreground. (See illustration.)

The Wolfenbuettel *Fontegara* is evidently a presentation copy as it alone contains an autograph dedication to the Prince, written in a beautifully-formed, intelligent handwriting with many ornate flourishes. In it, the author expresses his sincere thanks for a gift of some excellent wine which has had a stimulating effect on his brain.

This copy of the work also contains a forty-page manuscript Appendix which gives 175 divisions on a cadence of six notes. These show an astonishing variety of ideas and a certain joyful exuberance in free ornamentation.

The printed Dedication begins with these words:—

TO THE ILLUSTRIOUS AND NOBLE PRINCE OF VENICE.

"It has at all times been apparent that the greater the eminence of emperors and kings, either on account of the extent of their domains or of their nobility of character, the greater has been their condescension towards their subjects and dependants. When a gift has been presented which is the fruit of a man's labour, a gift which is small indeed when compared to their eminence, it has not been scorned, but has been graciously accepted. Such examples, Noble Prince, have given me courage. In consequence, I place in your hands, present and dedicate this my work to your Excellency, namely a book on the recorder, called *Fontegara*."

Then follows a passage in praise of music, its nobility and dignity. After which he thanks the Prince for all the favours bestowed on him and his family. In the closing sentence, he protects himself against piracy and states his rights:—

"No one may dare to print or to have printed elsewhere within the next twenty years this work or any like it, or to sell it without the author's consent, on pain of having the printed copies confiscated and of paying ten *scudi* for every copy that is found. This is confirmed by the privilege and gracious decree of the Noble Senate of the Illustrious Government of Venice. Fare well."

Ganassi divides his book into 25 chapters. There are 30 pages of text, 9 pages of fingering charts, and 135 pages of musical examples (exclusive of another 40 manuscript pages in the Appendix of the Wolfenbuettel copy).

Three essentials. The author begins by pointing out to the player that he should take the human voice as his model in every respect.

"One can imitate the expression of the human voice with a wind or a string instrument just as a good painter can reproduce all the creations of nature by varying his colours.

Ganassi is of opinion that the recorder is meant above all things to imitate the human voice and especially speech. To achieve this, three things are essential: the art of breathing, dexterity of the fingers, and proper tonguing. In connection with the art of breathing, he again refers to the voice.

"When a singer has serious words to sing, his expression is sad; but when the text is gay, his expression is also gay. When the recorder player wants to imitate these effects, his blowing should be of medium strength so that he can increase or decrease it at any moment."

The author is obviously meaning an increase or decrease in the volume of sound by means of diaphragmatic breath control suitable to the possibilities of the instrument.

Fingering. In explaining the fingering charts, the author gives appropriate technical instructions. The charts are laid out in much the same way as those in use today: white rings for open holes, black when covered, and half black when half covered. They are so devised as to be applicable to three different sizes of recorders, treble g', tenor c' and bass f', starting with the lowest note of the instrument with all the holes covered. (The sopranino must have been known to him (see frontispiece); but he does not give any special fingering for it.) He shows how the chromatic scale is fingered. He also remarks that in playing a rising diatonic scale comprising the 13 "usual" notes, the nine lower notes (for instance f' to G' on the treble recorder) should be blown *grave*, that is, with care, and the four upper ones (A' to D') with sharper breath.

Ganassi says that he has played the recorder for a great many years and has taken delight in consorting with many distinguished artists of his generation.

"But (he continues) I have never met any experienced players who used more than the usual thirteen notes except one or two performers who could add just one more note or perhaps two. My study of fingering has led me to discover what my predecessors did not know. I have found seven higher notes. Not that my contemporaries had no knowledge of how to produce these, but they have given up trying because of their difficulty."

These seven notes have a chapter to themselves. Neither Virdung or Agricola in the 16th century, nor Praetorius or Mersenne in the 17th, mention this extended range which only became common knowledge and practice about the middle of the 17th century.

Intonation. Ganassi has much to say about true intonation. He seems fully aware of the pitfalls that await craftsmen and says that recorders made by different masters never turn out the same and differ not only in intonation but in the shape of the

holes and the bore. He also takes into account the fact that one player differs from another in their method of blowing and in the acuteness of their hearing and for these reasons are liable to use different fingerings. Ganassi indicates alternative fingerings which may rectify the pitch on one instrument or another. If none of these are satisfactory, he suggests that the player should invent new fingerings; and should these be unsatisfactory, he must regulate the pitch by his breathing, as a note can be sharpened by stronger blowing and flattened by giving less breath. In this way, he says, one can learn to play any recorder.

"You must be aware (he concludes) that when nature fails, art must be your master."

His fingerings are not always applicable to all modern recorders.

Articulation. Ganassi has 4 chapters on articulation. In these he again shows what an expert recorder player he himself must have been, as well as a conscientious and thorough teacher.

He begins by giving 3 basic articulations and then explains many others derived from these. He distinguishes between the relative stress of the two syllables in double tonguing technique.

1. Te-ke, te-ke, — which is harsh and hard (a kind of staccato).

2.—Te-re, te-re, — which combines hard and smooth (soft legato).

3. Le-re, le-re, — which is soft and even; and when done very fast, no articulation is discernible. You then have almost a pure legato.

Ganassi does not of course use the "termini technici" *legato*, *non legato* and so on, but only the syllables and their effect as being smooth or harsh.

Other articulations he mentions are:—

De-de, — which produces a pure non-legato, and

Dar-der-dir, etc. — a kind of portamento.

For pure legato, no consonants are pronounced.

The percussive consonants should first be practised alone: T-t-t-t, etc.

Next, single syllables with each of the vowels: Ta-te-ti, etc.

Then in combination with the softer consonant: Tar-ter-tir, etc.

Finally, the two syllables with each of the vowels:

1. Ta-ka, te-ke, ti-ki, etc.

2. Ta-ra, te-re, ti-ri, etc.

3. La-ra, le-re, li-ri, etc.

When the student has mastered all of these, he may then choose the vowel he finds the easiest as his permanent vowel.

Ornamentation. According to Ganassi, ornamentation is not only essential but indispensable.

"Had you the best articulation and tonguing in the world (he says) but no knowledge of ornamentation, all your pains would be in vain. For the one cannot exist without the other."

The art of ornamentation, he explains, is nothing other than a variation or division of a basic melody or a melodic passage which is by nature simple and short.

There are of course endless examples of this art in the early organ tablatures and virginal books, but Ganassi is the first to provide a practical treatise for players of string and wind instruments (notably the recorder), and for singers.

As a primary rule, the author says that a division must begin and end on the basic notes; yet he generously allows trained singers to follow their own inspiration in *coloratura*.

"... when they know that in their ornaments they are bound to make a mistake of some kind by wanting to produce an especially good phrase. For the ornamentation will be so pure and swift that occasional small faults are willingly tolerated on account of the beauty of the whole and do not offend the ear."

He also allows the possibility of using dotted rhythms and syncopation, but warns the performer to make sure that he comes on the beat with the right note at the right moment; what lies between he may play more freely.

It is not possible here to enter into all the intricacies of his 135 pages of musical examples. But we must not omit to mention that of his 4 categories of divisions, his *Regula Seconda* (*Proportio sesquiquarta*) splits the semibreve into 5 crochets (ten quavers or twenty semiquavers) and his *Regula quarta* (*Proportio super tripartiensquarta*) into 7 crochets (14 quavers or 28 semiquavers). One facsimile page of his examples which include divisions of this kind will be found on another page. (See illustrations.)

Ganassi makes many suggestions concerning the various possibilities of putting these methods into practice; but he concludes by saying that

"You need not embellish these melodies in the way I have shown you. You can also do it in quite a different way, entirely according to your own discretion."

Galanteria and Trills. Having guided his scholars through this fundamental course of instruction on ornamentation, Ganassi again addresses the recorder player in particular and, in repeating what he said at the outset, he adds a few finishing touches.

"A good musician must have mastered three things. The first and most important is the art of imitating the human voice, even in the finer details of expression. With the help of perfect breathing technique, all that appertains to the human voice can be imitated, i.e., its easy rise and fall, its vivacity, its gracefulness and beauty, as also its faculty of giving expression to joy and pain. Secondly, the player must have dexterous fingers; this goes hand in hand with clever breathing. But to achieve this, both exercise and experience are necessary."

In addition, *Galanteria* must be mastered, that is, the art of pleasant and sweet playing based on a thorough knowledge of ornamentation, including various kinds of trills which enliven the music and make it more gracious.

Ganassi supplies fingering charts for three kinds of shakes: the trill with a whole tone, with a semitone and with a major and a minor third. The latter he says are suitable in bold and merry pieces and should be played fast. For gentle and pleasant music he prefers whole tone and semitone trills. In his charts, "V" stands for *Vivace* and "S" for *Suave*. The finger with which the trill is executed is marked with the letter "t" which stands for *tremolo*. No further instructions are given. At this period, trills apparently began mostly on the main note, although the trill beginning on the auxiliary was already known and appreciated.

Conclusion. Ganassi brings his work to an end by addressing the reader as follows:—

"I have no intention of going any further, for I have always been a lover of brevity. I offer you this humble gift which I pray Almighty God you will accept with gracious affection and good-will. Should it contain a few mistakes, I pray your kind indulgence and you must know that it is on your behalf that I have voluntarily undertaken this not altogether trifling task. Therefore, benign and indulgent Reader, should I have failed to satisfy you, put the blame not on myself but on my limited knowledge, and accept my good-will. Fare-well."

An English translation of the complete work will be valuable to all recorder players for the richness of its detailed information and thoroughness.

Ornamentation is indeed an ancient practice which is known to have flourished at least from the 12th century onwards. The lessons that can be learnt from the old organ tablatures are numerous, and the music of the early and late Middle Ages cannot be thought of without it. But it is to Ganassi's credit that he has brought together systematically this practice which had been handed on from master to master, and that he has supplied the recorder player with a textbook in which he may learn how to master his instrument and make the fullest possible use of it.

THE INFLUENCE OF ATTILIO ARIOSTI

BY

HARRY DANKS

TO PLAYERS OF THE VIOLA D'AMORE, the name of Ariosti is always associated with six sonatas he wrote for the instrument. Ariosti defines them as *Lezioni* and scholars have doubted if they were written for the viola d'amore. A number of theories have been put forward in support of this doubt, the chief one being the tuning that the composer gives for the instrument. For each sonata a different tuning is given but for four strings only, which does suggest the violin instead of the viola d'amore with its six or seven strings. The composer however makes it quite clear in an introduction, that his intention is to introduce violinists to the viola d'amore through his *Lezioni* without the necessity of acquiring a new technique. After paying homage to the reigning monarch Ariosti writes:

"Readers and subscribers, the following tunings are given to encourage you in my method that you have asked me to explain. It is better to call these compositions 'lessons'; their study will facilitate the playing of the works for viola d'amore. You will then realise that it was necessary not by a caprice of mine that I brought the viola d'amore to your knowledge after having first advised you to study the violin first. Without this you would have found a lot of trouble in playing the instrument."

Ariosti restricts himself to four strings and gives a notation that can be fingered with the normal violin system on a violin tuned as the composer suggests.

In a cantata for soprano voice with viola d'amore obligato, Ariosti gives the tuning for six strings, proof enough that he knew the instrument.

Ariosti had the reputation of being a fine player of the viola d'amore, and though he worked and composed in the field of opera, his name and fame appears to rest on the sonatas. There is, however, another side to this musician's life and though most of the following is theoretical, it probably comes very close to fact. He was a much travelled man, frequenting the Courts of Mantua, Florence and Berlin: in this last named city Queen Sophia Charlotte appointed Ariosti her Maestro di Musica in the autumn of 1697. The Queen had received her musical education from her father's Kapellmeister, Agostino Steffani, and on most evenings concerts were held in her apartments, she herself presiding at the harpsichord. Bononcini also stayed at the Court for a time and it is recorded that the Queen with Ariosti and Bononcini frequently played together. Ariosti was highly

esteemed in Berlin, so much so that his opera, *La Festa del Himeneo*, was the first Italian opera to be given in Berlin; this was on June 1st, 1700. England saw quite a lot of Ariosti and his unfortunate operatic venture with Handel and Bononcini is too well known to need description here. But it is known that in 1716 he made one of several return trips to his native Italy. He had been in England long enough to establish a friendship with Handel and other musical personalities and to hear and see our musical styles. Is it possible for him to have heard the English viols? There is every reason to believe that he did, in spite of the lateness of the day when considering the decline of the viols in this country.

I have tried to ascertain how long the viols continued to be played after the influx of the "scoulding violins." We know that a few faithful enthusiasts continued with the "old way," and Pepys relates how his master, Lord Sandwich, after following the new style for a time, "fell once more to a good Fancie."

Almost sixty years later Roger North in his *Memoires of Musick* records that the French manner of instrumental music did not gain ground so rapidly as to make a revolution all at once and that during the greater part of Charles II's reign, the old music was used in the country and in many assemblies and societies in London.

Another pointer is Christopher Simpson's *Division Violist*. While bemoaning the fact that music for the viols "is now much neglected," the demand for his book was such, that a third edition was issued in 1712 forty-three years after his death. Throughout the reign of Charles II the Court establishment included both viols and violins and up to the end of the century people came to this country to study the bass viol. I feel sure that the viols in consort were being played often enough for Ariosti to have been impressed by their unique and lovely quality.

About this time a fellow countryman of Ariosti, Vivaldi, was establishing the concerto style of writing and composing innumerable works for a great variety of instrumental ensembles. I have, for instance, a most unusual concerto which is called *Concerto Funebre* scored for Hautbois sordini, Salmoe, Viole all'Inglese, with tutti violins, violette and the usual bass line for continuo. The inclusion of three English viols used in a concertino style of composition, surely indicates the influence of some musician and traveller from England. Again in the Oratorio, *Juditha*, Vivaldi scores the accompaniment of one aria for four English viols.

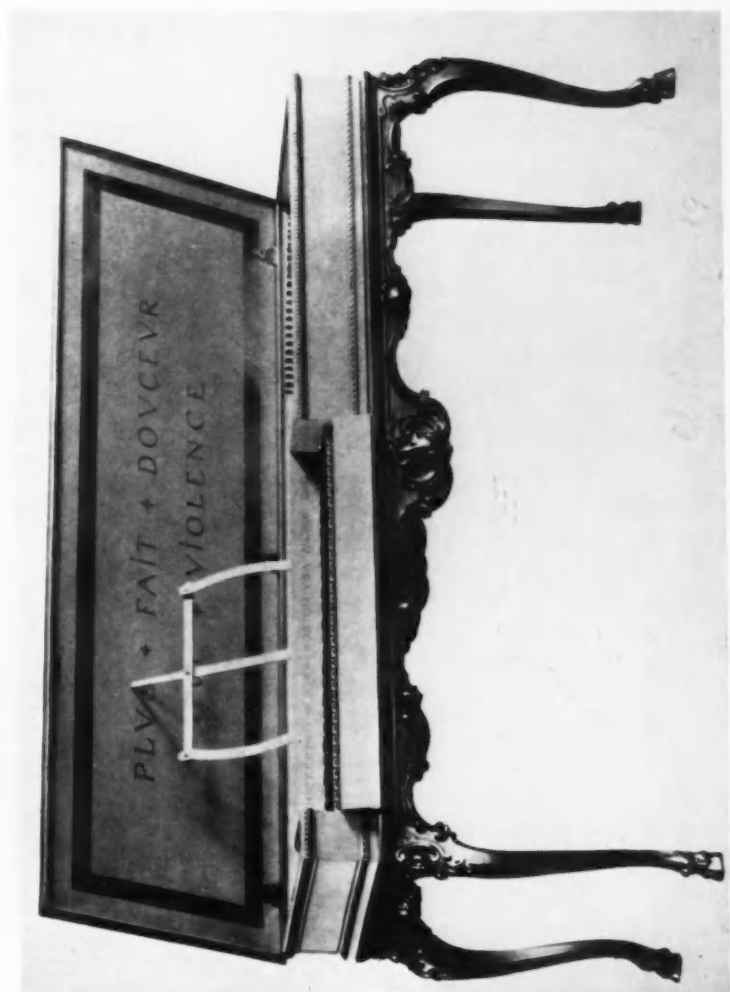
There is no record of a visit to this country by Vivaldi and therefore the style of writing for the viols must have been taken out to him in Italy and I prefer to think of Ariosti as the courier. In support of my theory of Ariosti's influence on Vivaldi, I need only mention the latter's eight concertos for viola d'amore. To write eight concertos for a comparatively unusual instrument such as the viola d'amore required a purpose or reason, and with only one renowned player at that time, Ariosti must have been the incentive. All the concertos are of virtuoso standard and are admirably suited to the requirements of a travelled soloist such as Ariosti.

Including the one with lute (which has been heard several times at Haslemere), seven concertos have the normal string accompaniment with continuo. The eighth shows something quite original for the period; in fact, it might be considered unusual even today. The score is headed: *Concerto con Viol d'Amor, Corni da Caccia, Hautbois e Fagotto*. There is bass line for continuo but none for strings.

Interchanges between the Courts of Italy and this country were frequent and it is reasonable to assume that musical styles were not unknown in either country; nevertheless I think it would require a musician of Ariosti's standing to tempt a composer like Vivaldi to write for the instruments I have mentioned, and, what is very important, someone with the requisite knowledge of those instruments.

It is reported that Ariosti was a very mild-mannered man and when the storm broke with Handel and Bononcini and the *Royal Academy of Music* terminated in bankruptcy, he left England for good. He was no match for the strength of a giant such as Handel.

What happened to Ariosti, where he went or when he died or anything about him after this period is not known, he simply faded from the musical scene. It would be good to think that he returned to his native Italy where in all probability he greatly influenced his younger contemporary, Antonio Vivaldi.




LARGE ORNATE CLAVICHORD MADE BY ARNOLD DOLMETSCH AT CHICKERING'S (1910)




FRONTISPIECE OF GANASSI'S TREATISE ON THE RECORDER.
 FONTEGARA (1535)

esempi del diminuir

Essempio del diminuir còposto: per star de natura e uae i particular p esser semp i cor de pportio



Essempio del diminuir còposto general: general p esser còposto de minute e me e pportio



Modo & pratica del diminuire.

Cap. 12.
Di sopra hauemo mostrato la natura de ogni sorte de diminuire hora segultero parre per parte a tra le cognitione con ogni facilità a me possibile si del falto ouer moto della seconda & terza e quarta e quinta & di ogni altro moto così mediar come nò mediar. E prima procederò con il numero della seconda laquale ti fara comoda ad ogni altro moto non mediato; con uarie uie de spazamenti in tempo perfetto & plation iperfecta: cò q. O: simelmente ne le gni imperfecti con la prolution iperfecta come qui. C. & aduertisse che l'ordine de qsto signo — — — — — richiude la baruda sopra la breue & in qsti la sem breue O. dato che il piu del catori & sonatori nò còsiderano altro che lo accomodarsi dela baruda

† 14



FRETTED PORTABLE CLAVICHORD WITH BUILT-IN INKPOT SAID TO HAVE
BELONGED TO BEETHOVEN (PARIS CONSERVATOIRE MUSEUM)

ON PLAYING THE CLAVICHORD

BY

DOROTHY SWAINSON

Plus fait douceur que violence was the motto Arnold Dolmetsch adopted to be inscribed inside the clavichords he made. It was well and truly chosen. The famous French culinary expert Boulestin might have been describing the character of the clavichord when, in his autobiography, he wrote this about wine:

"People must be made to understand that wine is a living thing, complete, fragile, subtle, and that if one treats it roughly, it refuses to give itself up and hides its perfumed soul."

And so also with the clavichord; sensitivity of touch and delicacy of hearing are necessary before this instrument will reveal its soul. A very good ear is essential because the player controls the pitch of every note he plays and it is possible to play horribly out of tune on a well-tuned instrument.

When a key is depressed, the tangent at the other end of it strikes the strings and *remains in contact with them* until the key is released. On all other keyboard instruments, once a key is depressed, nothing further can be done with it except releasing it at the right moment. Not so with the clavichord; after the initial impact, the player must listen to what is happening to the sound and how he can influence it until the moment he releases the key.

If the key is depressed too far, the strings are overstretched and the sound is too sharp. If it is depressed just the right amount and held in that position on any longish note, it will sound in tune, but rather lifeless.

The correct touch consists in relaxing the pressure immediately after striking the key, keeping the tangent in contact with the strings but at a lower tension, without however affecting the pitch. In so doing, one allows the strings to vibrate more freely and the result will be a singing quality of tone. If, on the contrary, one continues to increase the pressure after striking the key, it has the disastrous result of raising the pitch progressively, and (as Türk says in his *Klavierschule*) the instrument "howls."

The *Bebung* or Vibrato effect which is peculiar to the clavichord has a sign of its own, a row of dots covered by a slur, but it is very seldom marked, even by C. P. E. Bach who apparently invented it. It is an indispensable adjunct to clavichord playing and one's musical sense must be one's guide as to which notes in any phrase are the most expressive and require a singing vibrato tone. This is produced by relaxing and renewing the pressure on the key with an up and down movement at approximately the same speed (according to the expression) as the violinist rocks his left hand from side to side. On a single note, the finger should be firmly planted on the key and not slide about on it. While holding it thus, one has the feeling of drawing the key towards one, as though closing the hand, and releasing this pull again. No up-and-down movement of the hand should be visible. Only when playing chords, some vertical movement of the hand becomes necessary.

This *Bebung* movement must always be preceded by a relaxation of the pressure on the key, as the minute variation in pitch must sway both above and below the true pitch. It must never perceptively raise the pitch. C. P. E. Bach tells one not to begin it too soon; it can even be begun halfway through the duration of a note. In any case, a slight delay after striking the key gives one time to relax the pressure.

Another Clavichord effect which C. P. E. Bach calls *Tragen der Töne* (carrying on or sustaining the notes) shares the same sign as the *Bebung* and is likewise hardly ever marked. It is extremely difficult to do, as the sound has to be prolonged without allowing the tangent to actually leave the strings, or for so short a moment that it is almost imperceptible to the ear. The best way to practice this is to strike the key as near its end as possible with one finger and slide it off, and replacing it by another finger just before the key is perceptibly released. This effect can be extremely useful in prolonging the sound of long notes; also during a series of repeated notes when a pulsation is needed rather than an attack on each note.

The fingers should always be able to feel the elasticity of the strings and, when playing staccato notes, be helped by the rebound for very short bright notes, yet not too short, as the strings will not have time to produce a pure sound. Quick notes are played in general with a very light touch, and there is no time to relax the pressure.

When a key is released, the interwoven felt at the opposite end to the bridge damps the sound so effectively that the finest shades of articulation are possible—silences so short that the

listener is unaware of them but merely feels that the music is making sense, just in the same way as the hard consonants (like p and t) in speech momentarily silence the voice of the speaker but do not interrupt the flow of articulate speech. An imperceptible jerk of the whole hand, as quick as lightning, may be helpful in very rapid articulation.

All one's finger movements in clavichord playing should be deliberate and as small as is compatible with clarity; the shoulder and elbow "feeling heavy" and relaxed; the wrist held on the level of the back of the hand; the fingers in a natural position just above the keys, ready to play.

In general, clavichord touch is slower than on any other keyboard. The volume of tone depends upon the speed at which a key is struck, the faster it falls, the louder the tone, but one should never hear the finger "knocking" on the key. Pianissimo notes require a very slow touch. The most sensitive nerve endings of the fingers are not in their tips which are cushioned, but on the ball, at the centre of the whorl. To increase sensitivity in these nerve endings, it is a good plan to feel different surfaces in turn (the smoothness of satin, the roughness of velvet, etc.) which has the effect of "waking up" one's fingers.

Türk advises one to practice gradation of tone by repeating the same note with a good finger (probably the middle finger), crescendo and diminuendo down to a pianissimo bordering on silence. If these gradations are mastered, the dynamic range of the clavichord is quite sufficient for any contrasts that the music may require.

In a good clavichord, the tangents should not be too near the strings; a certain depth of touch is essential. Neither should the tangent rail (if there is one) be too tight and restrict the elasticity of the strings. It should have screws underneath it wherewith to adjust it to one's liking. Without a tangent rail, there is greater danger of overstepping the mark and playing out of tune, but expert players may prefer this freedom.

One must also bear in mind that the lower register of nearly all clavichords is more sonorous than the upper. Also that the strings being thicker in the base, the touch is somewhat heavier. But a good player will soon learn not to drown the treble by playing too loudly in the bass.

The average pianist is, I think, often unaware of the infinite gradations of tone of which the complex mechanism of the modern piano is capable. If pianists could acquire these gradations by means of the simplest mechanism in any keyboard instrument, that of the clavichord, I have no hesitation in saying that, besides discovering the musical possibilities of this enchanting instrument, their piano touch would improve out of all recognition.

A proof of this bold statement may be read in Dr. Burney's account of his travels through the Netherlands, France and Germany. On July 6th, 1772, he attended a musical party in Vienna at a certain Mr. Augier's. Here is part of his description of it:—

"The concert was begun by a child of eight or nine years old . . . who played two difficult lessons of Scarlatti . . . upon a small and not good piano-forte. The neatness of this child's execution did not so much surprise me, though uncommon, as her expression. All the *pianos* and *fortes* were so judiciously attended to; and there was such shading of some passages, and force given to others, as nothing but the best teaching, or greatest natural feeling and sensibility could produce. I enquired of Signor Georgio, an Italian who attended her, upon what instrument she usually practised at home and was answered, 'On the clavichord.' This accounts for her expression. . . ."

And this on a comparatively primitive early fortepiano!

So many good modern clavichords are becoming available that few players may have to make do with an old one which is fretted, that is, one in which two or even three keys strike the same pair of strings. I must end this short article by refuting the generally accepted and oft-repeated assertion that fretted clavichords cannot be tuned to equal temperament and that certain things are impossible to play on such instruments. They can be so tuned by bending the tangents; a fretted third can be played by imperceptibly breaking it, and a trill can be played on two fretted keys slightly non legato. The chief disadvantage of a fretted clavichord is inequality of touch.

Better to have a fretted one than none at all!

THE CONSORT

IS EDITED BY

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THE CONSORT is obtainable from Mrs. King at the above address, price 3/6 (post free). Members receive a free copy.

C.D.

E. W. LANGHAM
Printers
Haslemere and Farnham

